



# INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

## Fire and Fall Injury Prevention

TOPIC: FIRE AND FALL INJURY PREVENTION FOR SENIORS

TIME FRAME: 20 - 30 minutes

AUDIENCE: Seniors

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn to reduce their risk of unintentional injury from fires and falls by changing or modifying behavior, habits, and environment.

PREPARATION:

Each year, more than 1.6 million older Americans go to the emergency room for fall-related injuries. **Among older adults, falls are the number one cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma, loss of independence, and injury-related deaths.**

In 2005, in the United States there were 3,675 civilian fire related deaths, and 17,925 civilian fire related injuries. Cooking is the leading cause of fire related injuries. The leading cause of fire related death is smoking. **Americans age 65 and older are 2.5 times more likely to die in fires than the overall population. As Americans age, their fire risk increases.**

Contributing factors include medication, hearing/vision loss, loss of strength, balance and mobility. It is possible to reduce the risk by changing or modifying behavior, habits, and environment.

KEY FALL PREVENTION MESSAGES:

- Clear the way. Keep stairs and walking areas free of electrical and phone cords, shoes, clothing, books, magazines, and other clutter.
- Improve the lighting in your home. Use night-lights to light the path between bedroom and bathroom. Turn on the lights before using the stairs.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and shower. Install grab bars on the wall next to the bathtub, shower, and toilet.
- Use only throw rugs with rubber, non-skid backing. Always smooth out wrinkles and folds in carpeting.
- Stand and get your balance before you walk.
- Exercise to build strength and improve your balance.

### KEY FIRE SAFETY MESSAGES:

- The number one cause of kitchen fires is cooking left unattended. NEVER leave stovetop cooking unattended.
- Wear tight, short, or rolled up sleeves, never loose or dangling.
- Use oven mitts or potholders; never use a dishtowel as a potholder.
- If a pan catches fire, slide a lid over it and turn off the burner.
- In case of an oven or microwave fire, turn off the oven, do not open the oven door, call 9-1-1.
- Don't cook if you are drowsy from medication. Plan meals around your medication.
- Keep clutter and combustibles away from stove.
- If your clothes catch on fire, STOP, DROP, and ROLL, or smother the flames with a towel or blanket.
- Test smoke alarms monthly; replace batteries at least once a year; replace smoke alarms every 10 years.
- Have an escape plan for your home. Know 2 ways out of every room.
- Crawl low under smoke.
- Never smoke when lying down, drowsy, or in bed. Use large, deep ashtrays. Never leave cigarettes unattended.
- Keep 3 feet clearance around space heaters. Unplug when leaving home or going to bed.

**Information provided by the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District / [sacmetrofire.ca.gov](http://sacmetrofire.ca.gov)  
2101 Hurley Way, Sacramento 95825  
(916) 566-4000**